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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: TAIWAN'S NAME CHANGE CAMPAIGN, U.S.-TAIWAN
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¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage February 10-12 on the DPP government's name change campaign, on the 2008 presidential elections, and on other local political issues. The pro-status quo "China Times" front-paged a banner headline February 11 that said "State Department Statement: The United States Does Not Support Name Change of Our State-run Enterprises." The paper also carried a news story on page four with the headline: "Chiou I-jen: United States Does Not Oppose Name Change but is Concerned about Taiwan Touching on the Four Noes [Pledge]." The pro-unification "United Daily News" also ran a banner headline on page three February 11 that read "United States Does Not Support Name Change; Bian: If It Were That Easy, Just Change [the Name] to Republic of Taiwan."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a news analysis in the pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's largest-circulation daily, said Washington is in no position to comment on Taiwan's name-change campaign, nor does Taiwan need U.S. support for the matter. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" asserted that the name change "represents an assertion of Taiwanese sovereignty." An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" also chimed in by saying the United States should not object to Taiwan's name change campaign, as it is "entirely our internal affair and none of Washington's concern." An op-ed piece in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily," however, said President Chen has purposely stepped on the red line drawn by the United States and China. A "China Times" editorial also criticized the DPP's move and said Washington's tough expression of its attitude this time indicated that it does not want to see more reckless moves from Taiwan to step on the red line of Taiwan independence. An op-ed piece in the "United Daily News" said the DPP's dictatorial name change move has created confrontations in Taiwan society and caused double crises in cross-Strait and Taiwan-U.S. relations. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" said "The DPP is determined to wage its silly cultural revolution, no matter what the people think." An op-ed in the English-language "Taipei Times," on the other hand, urged Washington to make some changes in the way it conducts its relations with Taiwan. End summary.

¶3. Taiwan's Name Change Campaign

A) "Smearing the Name-Change Campaign, Ma's Mentality is Questionable"

Journalist Tsou Jiing-wen noted in a news analysis in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 550,000] (2/12):

"Is Taiwan a complete country or not after all? The answer is quite evident if one just takes a look at the U.S. State Department, which can always point its fingers at Taiwan's domestic affairs! [Such a

situation] also highlighted the necessity for [Taiwan] to take this small step of changing the names of its state-own enterprises. If [Taiwan] continues to hide its head in the sand when it comes to this issue that it will have to face sooner or later, its future plan to rectify the island's name and write a new constitution will all become castles in the air.

"The Americans are in no position to comment on the name change for the Chinese Petroleum Corporation and the China Shipbuilding, and [we] do not need the United States' 'support.' All we need is the consensus of Taiwan citizens. ... For the public, as long as it is the right thing to do, just go ahead and do it without hesitation. [We] don't need to hear the nonsense of the Americans or local politicians!"

B) "Half-baked Name Changes, Taiwan"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (2/11):

"Sadly, if predictably, the U.S. State Department has expressed disapproval at the Chen administration's late foray into the symbolism of nation-building as an act of aggression against its beloved -- and fictional -- cross-strait 'status quo.' But now it seems that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her China-friendly underlings may not need to be so fearful of the changes that have been made to the titles of a number of Taiwanese state-owned firms or institutions.

"The change to the names represents an assertion of Taiwanese sovereignty, and it is this assertiveness that riles Beijing, irritates the pan-blue camp in Taiwan and unnerves the State Department. It is also 'angering' unions for the affected organizations, though in many cases the union hierarchies are de facto vehicles of pro-unification political parties anyway. Change is often a good thing, and in the case of state-owned enterprises

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and agencies, changing names to reflect the reality and justice of Taiwanese self-determination should have been inevitable. Indeed, it should have happened within months of President Chen Shui-bian taking office in 2000. ..."

C) "U.S. Should Not Object to 'Taiwan'"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (2/12):

"We urge the Democratic Progressive Party administration to remain firm in promoting changes in the names of our state enterprises or other relevant officially-backed agencies to reflect their origin in Taiwan despite open conservative resistance domestically and veiled opposition by the United States. ... While opposition from the conservative KMT-led opposition was predictable, the United States administration of Republican President George W. Bush also openly expressed its 'lack of support' for changes in the names of our state enterprises to show that they are from Taiwan, not the PRC.

...

"Although McCormack refrained from directly 'opposing' the changes, we believe his comments were unwarranted. The names of corporate bodies in Taiwan, state-owned or private, are entirely our internal affair and none of Washington's concern, unless the United States government intends to interfere in both our domestic affairs and the global free market by interfering in the management of economic corporations. More fundamentally, the State Department's citation of the 'four noes' is disingenuous as it ignores the fact that the changes do not involve alteration of our formal moniker of 'the Republic of China' and the fact that President Chen's pledges were predicated on the lack of intent by Beijing to use force against Taiwan, a condition violated by the PRC's enactment of a belligerent 'anti-secession law' in March 2005. Moreover, as noted Saturday by Presidential Secretary-General Chiou I-jen, Washington and other world powers themselves bear considerable responsibility for the fact that the Taiwan government can neither change or use the R.O.C. moniker.

"After all, Washington officials have repeatedly insisted that such

a change, which would require a constitutional amendment, would be 'provocative,' but also block the use of the R.O.C. title in the few major international organizations in which we participate or in representative agencies in their countries. Since Taiwan is not part of the PRC, which is identified the world over as 'China,' it is harmful to our own interests to retain terms in the names of our state enterprises that foster confusion with the PRC or PRC-based entities. We are indeed curious about what feasible options to resolve this actually existing dilemma would meet Washington's approval if we cannot neither use or change 'the R.O.C.' and should not, in Washington's view, use our own geographically and politically correct term 'Taiwan.' ..."

D) "A-Bian Purposely Steps on the Red Line [Drawn by] the United States and China"

Emerson Chang, Director of Nan Hua University's Department of International Studies, opined in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] (2/12):

"... Certain signs indicated that, even though Chen Shui-bian had used surprise tactics to make the change name [campaign] a fact, and such a move will not be retaliated against by the United States, the United States has actually used the differences in the way it handled two consecutive incidents [concerning Taiwan] to draw a bottom line for its Taiwan policy. ... The statement by [State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack] was the first time that the State Department expressed its view in a negative language following Chen's public call on CNN January 27 for writing [Taiwan] a new constitution and the island's UN bid under the name of Taiwan. During the [State Department] press briefing on January 31, when asked about the issue regarding [Taiwan's] new constitution, the spokesman only briefly mentioned that 'the U.S. policy remains unchanged' without saying anything negative [about Taiwan]. When one compares [the remarks] made during these two occasions, two layers of significance are revealed: First, the United States has set its bottom line for its Taiwan policy on the 'four noes' [pledge]; and second, the United States can tolerate the political ideas that are advocated but cannot be realized by Chen (such as writing a new constitution and Taiwan's UN bid), even though these ideas clash with the spirit of the 'four noes' [pledge]. ..."

E) "Failing to Strive for Administrative Performance, [DPP] Can Only Replace It with 'Striving for Name Change'"

The pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (2/12):
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"... Why on earth did the Bian administration want to push it so insistently and hastily? In addition to the afore-mentioned [reason] to 'strive for' its administrative performance, another reason is to stir up confrontation. To de-Sinify some symbolic agencies can satisfy the needs of the hardcore Green supporters on the one hand and ignite the deep-Blue people to create ethnic confrontation on the other hand. Once the Blue camp lashes back, it will be marked with a red cap and labeled as sympathetic to China; as confrontations between the unification and independence supporters and mistrust between ethnic groups are stirred up, Chen Shui-bian can once again solicit support from and command the originally loosely-organized nativist voters. Should Beijing add fuel and make some tough remarks, it will be just what Chen hopes for - the Blue camp that opposes [the name change campaign] will be automatically turned into traitors that help China beat up the Taiwan people. ..."

"How is it that this regime, which uses stereotyped ideology as its weapon, has this autocratic [mentality], and uses smearing and igniting the public ire as its means to do whatever it wants, even at the expense of distorting the system and trampling the law, in any way different from the previous Fascist regime? The United States expressed a tough attitude [toward Chen's move] this time because it fears to see more reckless moves toward the red line of Taiwan independence. If the Taiwan people continue to tolerate [Chen's moves] quietly, what they will confront is perhaps the complete collapse and destruction of democracy and the rule of law."

F) "Insisting on [Pushing for] the Name Change Campaign, [DPP] Touches on Sensitive Issues"

Professor Philip Yang of National Taiwan University's Department of Political Science opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (2/11):

"... The real effects of name change lie possibly in deepening the Taiwan-centered ideology and creating a favorable environment [for the DPP's] campaigning. This is about the DPP's position and interests, which are understandable. But under the circumstance of lacking a powerful administrative performance and an internal consensus, [the DPP's] dictatorial name change move will not only create confrontations in Taiwan society but will also cause double crises in cross-Straits and Taiwan-U.S. relations. ...

"The U.S. warning was a reminder [asking Taiwan] to exercise restraint. Taiwan people is clearly aware of the key role of the United States in Taiwan's security and cross-Straits relations - that it is both a protector of [Taiwan's] security and a policy balancer. But when will the Taiwan government understand that 'maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait' is the real consensus and interest of the Taiwan people."

G) "Another 'victory' for zealots"

An editorial of the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] said (2/11):

"... We believe it is even possible, and indeed highly likely, that Beijing will take advantage of the name changing to interfere in contracts that already exist, such as international postal agreements and oil exploration deals. We do not buy the government's argument claiming that changing the names at this juncture is somehow merely intended to avoid confusion among muddle-headed foreigners.

"According to the head of what is now called the Taiwan Post, the old title 'Chunghwa Post' was confusing to foreigners because it looked and sounded like 'Changhwa,' a major city in central Taiwan. With all due respect to the fine citizens of Changhwa, we believe that any foreigners who don't know 'Chunghwa' refers to China and things Chinese almost certainly have never heard of the city of Changhwa. The DPP is determined to wage its silly cultural revolution, no matter what the people think. While the financial damage is already all but done, we hope that the DPP's reckless behavior will not end up harming Taiwan's long-term interests by opening our institutions up to even more interference from Beijing."

12. U.S.-Taiwan Relations

"The U.S. Relationship with Taiwan"

Nat Bellocchi, former AIT chairman and now special adviser to the Liberty Times Group, commented in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (2/11):

"... The relationship between the U.S. and Taiwan remains almost as RELATIONS

sensitive as that between the U.S. and China. It is obvious the U.S. does not want war with China, and equally obvious that China does not want war with the U.S. This equilibrium, however, could be disturbed by cross-Straits strife, but rather than seeking a resolution, China refuses any dialogue with Taiwan, and the US continues to limit its dialogue with the nation. Instead, the U.S. should also look ahead and assess the possible results of the two forthcoming elections -- the first in December for members of the Legislative Yuan and then in March next year for a new president -- and how they might impact U.S. policies regarding cross-strait matters. ...

"If either the KMT or DPP gained control over both the Legislative Yuan and the Executive Yuan, the impact would be felt in Taiwan, the U.S. and China. In Taiwan, the most important impact would be seen in the manner in which the population reacts to the results. For the U.S., with its global commitments, the impact would likely force

a reappraisal of Taiwan's domestic political interests and of the winning party's relations to China. ...

"Taiwan today is a democracy in which one party wants a temporary Republic of China with the objective of eventually becoming a part of China, while the other accepts a temporary Republic of China with the eventual objective of becoming a separate entity. China wants Taiwan entirely, but will not talk to its legitimate officials. The U.S. does not want a war over this issue, but it also does not want to communicate openly with Taiwan's legitimate officials. This relationship clearly does not make sense. China may well change its policy on dialogue with Taiwan next year regardless of who wins the elections. Isn't it time for the U.S. to do the same?"

YOUNG